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A TRIBUTE

TO THE

MEMORY OF

ALEXANDER SYMINGTON, ESQ.

WHO SUDDENLY DEPARTED THIS LIFE, FEBRUARY 9, 1852.

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER MACKLIN,

Pastor of the Scots Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

The following Tribute to the Memory of Mr. ALEXANDER SYMINGTON, which is printed by request, for the use of his family and friends, is the substance of an address made at the funeral, with some additions from a sermon preached on the succeeding Sabbath.

A TRIBUTE.

THE word of God is the great storehouse of consolation for the afflicted. Multitudes will join with the Psalmist in his testimony, that unless God's word had been his support and delight, he should have perished in his affliction. Never is the word of God felt to be more precious than when our hearts are bleeding under the bereaving strokes of death. Without the light of revelation, death would be a painful, a dark, an awful mystery. When our dear and loved ones are torn from us by death, without the light of revelation, our sorrow would be a hopeless sorrow. But

while we attend to the divine instructions, precious promises, and heavenly hopes and consolations which are found in the true sayings of God, light arises to us in the darkness, a smile gleams through the countenance of tears, and while we still sorrow, we sorrow not as those that have no hope.

God, who is the Comforter of those that are cast down, speaks to us, by his word, in the deep sorrow and desolation of bereavement, and bids us look upward. As we witness the terrors of the dying struggle, or when memory recalls the heart-rending scene, and dwells on the sad signs of mortality, we are assured that this dark scene has a bright side. Death is not the end of man's existence. Man is immortal. That breathless body is only the clay tenement. The deathless inhabi-

tant of that earthly house has entered on a new and a higher state of existence. Even under the comparative darkness of the Old Testament, we have strong proofs and bright hopes of immortality. But now, in the remarkable words of the apostle Paul, "our Saviour, Jesus Christ, hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Jesus has the words of eternal life. He assures us that there is a heaven, and as he speaks to us of heaven, his sweet words are a healing balm to our crushed and bleeding hearts. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you

unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Still farther to attract and to comfort our hearts, God in his word sets before us the unfading glories and unspeakable bliss of the heavenly world. Sometimes heaven is represented as a kingdom, where all are kings and priests unto God, and where the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Sometimes heaven is spoken of as a land, or country, "a better country, even a heavenly," "where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick;" "and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Sometimes heaven is described as a city; "a city that has no need

of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Once more, not to dwell on these bright descriptions, heaven is represented as paradise, where the glorified shall dwell for ever with Jesus, and shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God.

Now, how unspeakably comforting is it to us under the sorrows of bereavement, to be assured on the divine authority of the Scriptures, that at the moment of death, the souls of believers do immediately pass into heaven's glory and unspeakable happiness. "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise," says Christ to the penitent, dying thief. Paul expected as soon as he was absent from the body to be present with the Lord. When the beggar

died, our Saviour tells us that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, and so we are authorized to believe that the departed spirit of the Christian is attended by ministering angels through the untried scenes of that new and glorious state of existence.

Moreover, when we turn our thoughts from the upward flight of the emancipated spirit, and look on the mortal part, with changed countenance, that must be sent away and hid in the grave, we are not left comfortless. Jesus says to us, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." The mortal part is not to perish and be forgotten. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dis-

honour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Such are the divine and glorious consolations which we have in our sorrow over the sudden departure of that beloved friend and dear servant of God, whose loss is so deeply and widely mourned this day. Blessed be God, he gave the clearest and most abundant evidences whose he was, whom he served, and whither he has gone. He was truly a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.

It is difficult for me to speak on this occasion, for I have lost a friend indeed. I mourn this day over the bonds of a most

pleasant friendship of nearly seventeen years, now for the first time broken, by the hand of death. The deeply bereaved family mourns their irreparable loss. There is also a wide circle of warm friends, who are true mourners on this melancholy occasion, and who weep with them that weep. A bereaved church also mourns, that has lost one of the most beloved and valued and important of her officers. We will fail of our duty if we do not lay deeply to heart the affecting and afflictive dispensation that has befallen us. The prophet of old strongly condemned the wicked Jews because when the righteous were removed by death, and merciful men were taken away, they did not lay it to heart. "The memory of the just is blessed." It is our duty to cherish the remembrance of the virtues and many

excellencies of our departed friend. We would not glorify him, for all the excellencies of God's children are the fruit of the Spirit. "In our flesh dwelleth no good thing." But it is our duty "to glorify God in him," for the grace bestowed on his servant, and for the great usefulness with which it pleased God to honour him in the Church and in the world. It would be easy to enlarge to any extent on the beautiful character and beneficent life of him whose earthly career is now terminated.

In contemplating his life, we see him as a citizen, public-spirited, ever ready to aid in the advancement and prosperity of the city of his nativity, and of his much-loved home.

We behold him as the honourable and prosperous merchant, whose name was

ever untarnished, and was ever the guaranty of honour and justice, of faithfulness and truth. His intercourse with the world did not falsify his profession of religion. In all circumstances, his deportment was that of the Christian gentleman, and he had "a good report of them that are without."

As a friend, he was one of those that are few and far between in this world; not one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, but a friend that loveth at all times; whose pleasant countenance and warm heart and friendly grasp, it was always refreshing to meet in this cold and heartless world.

As a Christian, his piety was deep and ardent. He ever chose the lowest place at his Saviour's feet. Because of his lowly views of himself, and his exalted

conceptions of the Saviour, his prayers were often most affecting, and will long be remembered. By the grace bestowed on him, he furnished a strong proof and bright illustration of the reality and blessedness of true religion.

His liberality was great, and flowed from his deep-felt obligations to his Redeemer. God prospered him in the things of the world, and having freely received, he freely gave. He honoured the Lord with his substance. He literally gave to every good object that was brought before him, and he was always one of those cheerful givers, whom it is pleasant to meet, and whom God loves.

He was also the Christian philanthropist, who not only gave his money, but also his time, and valuable and unwearied services to the cause of humanity and

benevolence; as the House of Refuge in this city, and the Institutions for the Blind, and for the Deaf and Dumb, will gladly testify, and will cherish his name among their earliest and most devoted friends and supporters.

As a Christian father he was most faithful and devoted in seeking the happiness, temporal and eternal, of his dear children, who were ever the objects of his tenderest love and most faithful care. God heard his prayers, and in large measure granted him the desires of his heart, for he permitted him to live to see three of his five dear children gathered beneath the wings of Jesus. He has left to those children a bright example, that they may follow him as he followed Christ: and we trust his prayers will long be a memorial for them before God, and bring down blessings

upon them through days and years to come.

God was glorified in him in all his relations to the Church of Christ. As a child of the Church he was a striking instance of God's blessing on parental training and faithfulness. He was a noble specimen of the training and system of the Presbyterian Church. He loved all who bore the image of Christ, and could truly say from the heart, "grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." But he was a true Presbyterian, having a deep and intelligent conviction that her doctrines and order are founded on the word of God. The Presbyterian Church has lost in him one of her warmest friends, one of her most liberal supporters and most devoted servants. He loved her institutions, and contributed thousands for

their support, and for a long course of years watched over the interests of her Boards in this city with the most devoted care. He served the Scots Presbyterian Church in this city for more than twenty years in the office of ruling elder, and was greatly useful and sincerely beloved. In his death she deeply mourns the loss of one of her brightest ornaments and most powerful supporters: but our trust is in that God who gave him to her, and who hath now taken him away, that he will supply his place and raise up other instruments to seek her peace and prosperity. Ardently did he love that venerable sanctuary which was the church of his childhood, and where he worshipped God all the days of his life. When weakened by that mortal disease that has now laid him low, he persevered in his attendance, and on Sab-

bath, the day before his death, he occupied that seat which is now vacant, and where, alas! we shall see his face no more. Though labouring greatly under the effects of disease, he was anxious to be present that day that he might give his contribution in our annual collection for the great cause of Foreign Missions. How suitable and beautiful the close of his earthly career! His last walk on earth was to and from the house of God, and his last act there was to present his offering to spread the name of Jesus over this dark world. God permitted him to arise next morning and to attend to the duty of family worship, which he faithfully observed night and morning; and in his prayer, as remembered afterwards, he was peculiarly earnest in his appeals to that Saviour

whom he was so soon to see, and with whom he now is, beholding his glory.

Shortly after, while conversing with a friend in his own house, suddenly "the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken, the pitcher was broken at the fountain, and the wheel was broken at the cistern." The heart stood still; and in a moment, by a kind of translation, "he was not, for God took him." His work was done. He had fulfilled his course. The days which God determined he should live were numbered. The number of his months had expired. He had reached the bounds he could not pass. Suddenly, almost without seeing or knowing death, he found himself with ministering angels, and with Christ amid the glories of paradise.

Thus, once more, the warnings of God

are brought home to our hearts in a most solemn and most affecting manner: "Prepare to meet thy God." "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." "Occupy till I come." "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." His Master will say unto him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

APPENDIX.

THE following testimonials to the character of Mr. Symington, as a Christian and a citizen, show that the foregoing tribute is not an overwrought picture.

BOARD OF MISSIONS.

MISSION ROOMS, No. 265 Chestnut street,
Philadelphia, February 9, 1852.

Report of the Committee of the Board of Missions, on the death of Mr. Alexander Symington.

It being announced to the Board that our Recording Secretary, Mr. Alexander Symington, had suddenly deceased, at his residence in this city, this morning, Messrs. C. C. Jones, James Dunlap, and A. W. Mitchell, were appointed a committee to prepare a minute in relation to his death. The committee presented the following minute, which was adopted and ordered to be entered on our minutes, and a copy enclosed to his family.

Mr. Symington was elected a member of the Board of Missions May 26, 1836, (Minutes of Board, Philadelphia, July 4, 1836,) and Recording Secretary, May 27, 1837, (Minutes of date,) and Recording Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Board, June 16, 1845. (Minutes of Ex. Committee of date.) He held these offices at the time of his decease, and had been a member of the Board nearly sixteen years.

As a member of the Board and its Recording Secretary, he uniformly discharged his duties punctually and faithfully; and with a piety, zeal, and conscientiousness, that shone brightly to the last. As a Christian, he was remarkable for humility, charity, love, diligence, and integrity in all the relations of life. He was associated in the direction and government of some of the most valued of the benevolent institutions of the city; of a public spirit, and constant, unfailing liberality—sincerely devoted to the interests of his own denomination, yet of catholic feeling and bearing towards all others. He was pure in purpose, firm in principle, considerate and prudent in counsel. His opinions were delivered with candour and sustained with decision; and he possessed the rare grace of differing from his brethren with a peacefulness and affection that drew to himself their warmer confidence and attachment.

The Board will long cherish his happy influence in their deliberations, and the memory of his agreeable and gentlemanly address, and of his attractive Christian and social virtues. It is believed that in the wide circle of his friendship and acquaintance, he was universally esteemed and respected, and died without an enemy. The summons of the Master was sudden, but for which, we have reason to be assured, he was habitually prepared. In a moment he was not, for God took him!

Resolved, That the Board of Missions sincerely mourn the sudden death of our brother Symington; and deplore his great loss to the Church in general, and to the Boards of our Church with which he was so long and so usefully connected.

Resolved, That this action of the Board be transmitted to Mr. Symington's family, with our unfeigned sympathy and condolence with them in their sad bereavement; and with our prayers for its sanctification, and their best spiritual and temporal welfare.

C. C. Jones,
James Dunlap,
A. W. Mitchell,
Committee.

THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

At a meeting of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, held February 17th, at the Publication Rooms, Dr. A. W. Mitchell in the chair, the following minute, prepared by direction of the Executive Committee, was read, adopted, and ordered to be entered on the Minutes of the Board.

In the providence of God, this Board is called upon to record the sudden demise of Alexander Symington, Esq., their late Vice-President. This event occurred on Monday the 9th inst., and the announcement of it has produced feelings of deep and heart-felt sorrow. In his decease the Board has lost an estimable friend and most valued coadjutor. The connection of Mr. Symington with this Institution may be traced back to its earliest origin. He was one among the few who sustained it by his counsels, his personal attendance, and his contributions in the season of its early struggles, when it had few friends, and its prospects were dark and lowering. In its subsequent career he was among its most efficient supporters and most active officers. As a member of its Executive Committee, he was seldom absent from his post, and his experience as a man of

business was always promptly rendered to promote its prosperity and secure its stability. No one felt a higher degree of gratification in marking its progress and in witnessing its present prosperity and usefulness. Had Mr. Symington rendered no other service to the Church of Christ, his memory should be held in grateful remembrance. In the judicatories of the Church also he was a diligent and useful member, and his presence will be missed in those judicatories from the lowest to the highest. The church of which he had for so many years been a ruling elder, regard his death as a bereavement which will not readily be repaired. To all the Boards of the Church he was a steadfast friend, and in several of them he was an active officer. As a citizen, he was esteemed wherever known; as a merchant, he was characterized by his integrity as well as his success; and as a man of enlarged benevolent feeling he has, beside his zeal for Church institutions, left the impress of his labours in other departments, and especially in the foundation and subsequent success of the House of Refuge in Philadelphia, which has been the instrument of rescuing so many unfortunate youth from hopeless vice and ruin.

It affords the Board, under these solemn circumstances, peculiar satisfaction to testify to the consistent and long-tried piety of their

deceased fellow-member, which affords them the assured confidence that his death, sudden and surprising as it was in its attendants, has been to him a translation from labour to reward, from a church militant to a church triumphant. The Board, in bowing to this dispensation of Divine Providence, would lay to heart the solemn admonition it conveys.

Resolved, That the Board most sincerely condole with the orphan children of their departed friend, deprived as they are of both father and mother, and would prayerfully commend them to that covenant God who afflicts not willingly, urging them to seek their father's God, who has specially promised to his people, that he will be the father of their orphan children.

Resolved, That a copy of this minute, properly attested, be transmitted to the family of Mr. Symington.

A. W. Mitchell, *Chairman.*

J. H. Jones, *Rec. Sec.*

MINUTE OF SESSION OF THE SCOTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

It has become the painful duty of this Session to record the mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence which has removed from

them an esteemed and beloved fellow-elder, who for more than twenty years has laboured, prayed, and contributed of his substance for the temporal and spiritual welfare of this church. On Monday morning, the 9th of February, Alexander Symington, while sitting in his own house, conversing with a friend, was suddenly struck with death, and in a few minutes exchanged earth, as we confidently believe, for heaven. His disease was *angina pectoris*. On the morning of the preceding Sabbath, though labouring under the symptoms of this mortal disease, he occupied his seat in the house of God, and gave his contribution to the cherished cause of Foreign Missions.

While the Session bow in submission to the will of the Head of the Church, who in his righteous though inscrutable providence has seen fit thus sorely to afflict them, they would acknowledge with gratitude the grace of God which so richly qualified their departed brother for usefulness in the church and the community, and made him an instrument of so much good; and they would cherish an affectionate remembrance of the pleasant and profitable intercourse which they were so long permitted to enjoy with him.

His prayers, and the consistent example of his public and private life, they would treasure up as a rich legacy to the Church, and a power-

ful incentive to survivors to greater diligence and zeal in the work of the Lord, that having shared his labours on earth, they may participate in his reward in heaven.

To his bereaved and beloved family, beloved for their own as well as their father's sake, they would tender their deepest sympathies. May the Father of the fatherless enrich them with the treasures of his grace, wisdom, and consolation.

Attest JOSEPH P. ENGLES,
Clerk of Session.

HOUSE OF REFUGE.

At a special meeting of the Board of Managers of the House of Refuge, held on the 11th inst., for the purpose of expressing their regret for the death of their colleague, Alexander Symington, Esq., the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, The Supreme Disposer of all things has in his wise Providence removed from this world our beloved colleague, Alexander Symington, and

Whereas, The members of this Board desire to

testify the high regard and esteem they entertained for the deceased, whose purity, integrity, and benevolence justly secured to him the respect and affection of his associates: therefore,

Resolved, That the Managers of the House of Refuge have heard with deep and sincere regret of the decease of Alexander Symington; that by his death they have lost a valued and cherished friend, the House of Refuge a judicious, efficient, and disinterested manager, the community an upright and excellent citizen, and the poor a kind and liberal benefactor.

Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed to convey the sincere sympathy of this Board to the family of Mr. Symington, for the afflicting loss they have sustained.

Messrs. James J. Barclay, Thomas Earp, John L. Goddard, Isaiah Hacker, and Alexander Fullerton were appointed the Committee under the second resolution, and it was, on motion,

Resolved, That the Secretary be instructed to publish the proceedings of the meeting.

From the minutes,

JOHN BIDDLE, *Secretary*.

Philadelphia, February 12th, 1852.

PHŒNIX MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY.

Extract from the Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Phœnix Mutual Insurance Company of Philadelphia, held February 18th, 1852.

"The President announced to the Board the sudden death, since their last meeting, of their much respected and highly esteemed colleague, Alexander Symington.

Whereupon it was

Resolved, That the Board sincerely deplore the loss of one, who was greatly endeared to them; and tender to the family of the deceased their heartfelt sympathy on this afflicting bereavement."

Attest

D. LEWIS, *Secretary*.

A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF ALEXANDER SYMINGTON, ESQ.,

LATE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

By the Rev. John Leyburn, D. D., Editor of the Home and Foreign Record of the Presbyterian Church.

But a few months since we were called upon to notice the decease of the venerable President of the Board of Publication, the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D. D. How little did we then imagine that in so short

a time we should also announce the death of our beloved and efficient Vice-President, Alexander Symington, Esq.! But it is even so. Our friend, Christian brother, and fellow-labourer, has been called away from the toils and trials of his earthly pilgrimage, to the rest of his eternal home. He has finished the battle of this life, and gone up to the victory of the life to come.

In our opinion, the Presbyterian Church has seldom lost a more valuable layman, than was this brother, who has just been carried to his long resting place in the grave. Long before our own removal to this city, we had heard of him as a successful Philadelphia merchant, and been familiar with his name as a member of the church courts and of the Boards. On our arrival here, to enter upon our duties in connection with the Board, he was one of the first to meet us with a welcome, and with a cordiality and efficiency of co-operation in carrying out the plans of the Institution with which he had been so long connected, which he was too modest then to promise, but which his constant, cheerful, and often difficult labours for successive years have made abundantly manifest. Week after week we had been accustomed to meet with him around the table of our Executive Committee. Often in the intervals between these meetings, would he come into our office, and with his smiling countenance, wise counsels, and kind words, cheer us amidst the onerous labours connected with the affairs of this branch of the Church's benevolent operations. He was present at the meeting of the Executive Committee the Tuesday before his death, looking as well as ever in his life. We saw him on his way to church on Sabbath morning, walking slowly, on account of some suspected disease of the heart, and on Monday morning the tidings came that he was no more! He died almost instantly, whilst engaged in conversation with a relative in his own house. He had met with his children

at breakfast and around the family altar that morning as usual. His departure was sudden, but it was unquestionably safe.

Born of Scotch parentage, he was early instructed in the principles of the gospel, and that system of truth held by the Presbyterian Church. He had been for many years an invaluable elder in the Scots church, of which the Rev. Mr. Macklin is pastor. The late Solomon Allen, Dr. A. W. Mitchell, and Mr. Symington were the three laymen most efficient in organizing the Board of Publication, and who, indeed, in connection with their clerical co-labourers, gave it being. The amount of time and labour they expended, in laying the foundations, and in afterwards helping on the superstructure of a great Institution such as this, no one can fully estimate who has not known from experience something of the numerous, complicated, and often perplexing details of such an organization. But what he did is known on high. His memorial is with the God and Saviour in whose presence he now is. He has rested from his labours and his works will long follow him; and in the remembrance of such a life, he has left to the Church an eloquent exemplification of what a Christian layman, content with successful accumulations, and ready to retire from business and devote himself to the interests of his Master's kingdom, can do; and in such remembrances, too, he has left an incomparably richer legacy for his bereaved orphan children, than all the wealth the world could give. May we be made wiser and better by the example which speaks to us from his life, and by the providence which appeals to us from his sudden and affecting death.